



Our Vision, Values and Culture

Proverbs 29:18

"Without vision the people perish". – This is often because without **vision** we lose sight of our purpose and we lose interest.

Values will help us create the **culture**, we are aiming for in order to carry out our vision. Our culture is simply the way we do things.

Craig Groeschel (the Senior pastor at life church in America that developed the Bible app for your phones),. Say's this

"The number one thing that shapes your culture is your values".

He also says this *"Healthy Culture doesn't just happen by accident, it happens by what you create and what you allow"* – So we have to be intentional and strategic.

Luke 10:27 summaries the vision of Oasis.

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' Luke 10:27

So from this 'vision verse' we have created our strapline:

"loving God, loving others, loving ourselves".

Our Values

Upwards to God (values of worship and prayer):

Worship: An all-embracing lifestyle, much more than simply what we do at church service

Prayer: An act of worship that glorifies God and reinforces our need for Him. Bringing ourselves before God, bringing before Him the needs of others, being in communion with Him always and in all things

Inwards to Each Other (value of effective relationships)

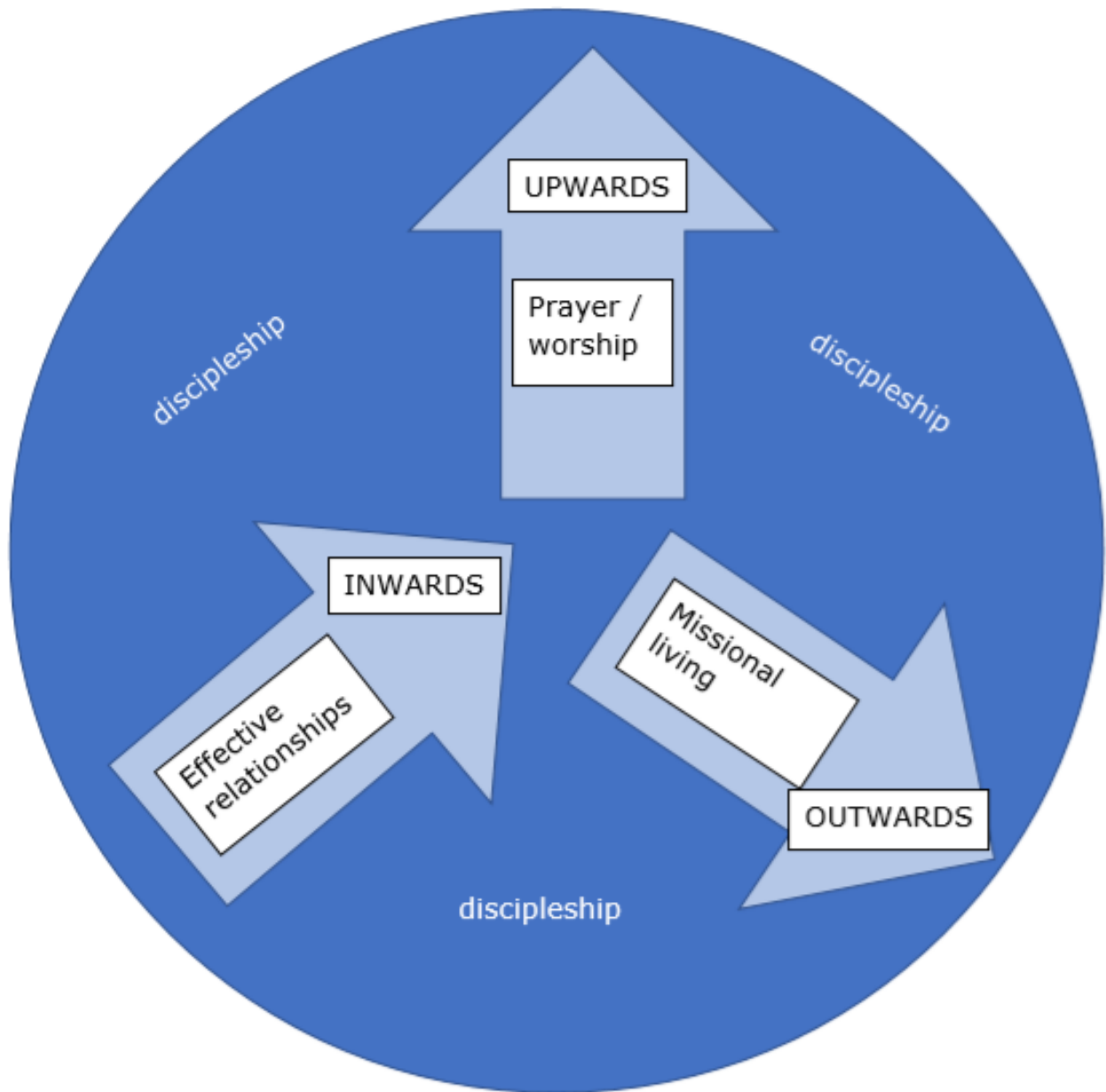
Relationships: A united church family building healthy relationships that serve others with integrity, responsibility, and accountability.



Outwards to the World:

Missional lifestyles: Outward looking lifestyles, seeking to connect with those outside the church family

Oasis Redditch - Values





Upwards to God (values of worship and prayer):

When Jesus called His disciples to be with Him. Mark 1:17 *come follow me*. He invited them to **walk** with Him. Both of these values of worship and prayer are in essence about us walking with Jesus.

When Jesus invited us to walk with Him, He did so, for us to walk daily so that He can be part of our everyday life, the whole 24 hours of our day. God wants us to be in relationship with Him. If we are to have an upward relationship with God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, then that includes absolutely everything we do in life not just spiritual things.

The verse 17 '*come follow me*' invitation is to an all-embracing lifestyle, it's not just when we do church services, it is in our regular life. Worship, is not the time on a Sunday morning when we corporately sing or praise God together. The singing or praise is just a small part of our everyday act of Worship.

Walking with Jesus everyday should be a joy, not a duty. Our upward relation with God is one we are designed and created for. It is to enjoy him for NOW and forever.

The truth is we don't have to invite God to be part of our life. He is always with us. He is never too busy to talk to.

God wants to be a part of our every life. Part of our all-embracing lifestyle is to be bring glory to God but it also to enjoy Him. He doesn't just want us to walk with Him but talk with Him too.

Prayer is a fundamental and crucial part of this upward relationship.

Jesus prayed regularly. Luke 6:12 *One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God*. Luke tells us that Jesus could often be found in quiet place praying. Prayer was as fundamental a part of Jesus' life as breathing.

For us Prayer is a fundamental part of our life as breathing!

Jesus was in constant contact with His Father and He spoke in a very personal, intimate and familiar way. The source of Jesus' ministry was his Upwards relationship with His Father. Jesus introduced His disciples to this very personal relationship. Jesus calls us into the very same intimacy with the Father that He Himself has always known.

Prayer is part of worship that glorifies God and reinforces our need for Him. Prayer is where we walk and talk with God, bringing before Him the needs of others and ourselves, being in communion with Him always and in all things.

So our upwards relationship with Jesus is how we walk and talk with Him.

The Gospel of John chapter 15 tells us that we must abide with Him if we are to produce good fruit. All our efforts, as good as they might be, are worthless if we do not have the upward relationship in our lives.



Ephesians 2:10 *For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

This scripture verse in the original Greek says we are His **poiema**. It means that you and I, are something fashioned, crafted together, someone's workmanship that is a masterpiece. It comes from the word poem. We are the poem of God.

We can either live trying to make our life our own work, or we can let our life become His workmanship. A poem can't write itself. It must be written and led by its author. It must flow from the author's heart. So to become the **Poem of God**, we must let our life flow from the God's heart. To know His heart we must walk with Him.

In this relationship we submit to His will above our own and His plans above our own and we will become His masterpiece.

If our upward relationship isn't good then this will affect our inward relationships within the oasis church family and our outward relations to the people we are trying to reach in the world outside.

So from a practical point of view we want our church to be one where people love God with everything, so we will uphold the values of prayer and worship in the way that we conduct our services and in the things we teach and study in lifegroups.

Inwards to Each Other (value of effective relationships)

Often we class ourselves as in the body of Christ because we have had a life changing encounter with God beforehand (The upward part of our triangle). And the closer we are in relationship with God the more we tend to want to spend time with others who are like minded to ourselves. This is often why many people are attracted to church because of the relationship with those who also aspire to be more like Jesus. Here we have accepted in our own lives we are not perfect, but we strive to be more like Jesus.

Jesus us the ultimate example for the balanced lifestyle and we read In **Ephesians 4:11-16:**

11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may



be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

As we focus inward, we are being equipped within the church, and are growing in faith, becoming spiritually mature, and are aiming to live as close to a Christ centred lifestyle as possible. In addition to this the body becomes unified in what we believe and in our faith. So being part of the church helps ground us. I will explain more about that in a second.

14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

So because we are growing spiritually and becoming more mature in our faith, it helps us as individuals to make wiser decisions. And we're not deceived by the things in the world that question our lifestyle and our beliefs. Instead we stand firm in what we believe.

As a body this is important. If we do this "inward part" well. As we grow spiritually as individuals, we also rub off on each other. We challenge each other in a friendly environment about what we believe. It causes us to think and confirm why we believe what we believe and our faith grows stronger. As we rub off each other all the things that are not Godly and truthful start to come to light, and we can start to adjust our lifestyle to remove those things.

In addition to this we learn from those that are more and less spiritually mature than us. This gives us direction on how to adjust our lifestyle. So even without the challenge from a good sermon we are still growing spiritually by naturally doing life together. The more respect we have for each other and for the body of Christ, we naturally becoming more accountable as a group, ministry or church.

Jesus constantly modelled this cycle of Come and see what I'm doing, come and do this with me as well, let me show you how to teach others to do the same, and then now you go and teach others by yourself even though I'm always with you.

Team Oasis is so important because we will all learn new things from each other, you will imitate what others do as you see Christ in them. Also, others will learn from, and question you, too. You will naturally become sharper in what you understand and reach a point in your spiritual maturity where you will intentionally go out to share with others and model a better way of living.



A prime example of this is in our children's and youth work. If we set the example of praying before and after we start a session. Then the young people will learn to firstly imitate this but also learn to feel comfortable with it as well. If we are doing this well, we may even find that they will feel comfortable praying out loud in a group setting. This is us leading by example.

Another way in which we can lead others in effective relationships is simply the way we treat others, people will follow our example in how we love, how we speak and how we forgive.

So from a practical point of view we want our church to be one where people love the body of Christ, so we will uphold the value of effective relationships in the way that we conduct ourselves as we do life together and in the things we teach and study in lifegroups.

Outwards to the World (Value of Missional Lifestyles):

Our vision of loving our neighbour as ourselves means that we want to lead lives that are not just all about us – or even all about God. Lives that reach beyond ourselves, and beyond the four walls of the church to people who don't yet know Jesus. It is through this missional living that new disciples are brought in and the church moves forward.

Why is Missional Living Important?

Matt 28 v .19 -20 – Go and make disciples of all ages was the last thing Jesus said to His disciples before he ascended into heaven.

So the message to a disciple is – go and make another disciple – in other words 'multiply yourself'.

Luke 10 v. 27 – our vision verse, says love your neighbour as yourself. If you love your neighbour (whoever that may be, remember it's not just about those who live next door as shown in the parable of the Good Samaritan). If we truly love our neighbours then why would we not want to share with them the Good news about Jesus?

At the beginning of Luke 10 we have the story of Jesus sending out the 72 – saying the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. We tend to think about Jesus and his 12 disciples, we don't often remember that Jesus had other followers too. Here we see 72 people being sent out to heal the sick and tell people about the Kingdom of God.



What is Missional Living?

Missional living is living a life that has an outward focus. A life that intentionally carries with it the mission of Jesus. Missional living looks different for everyone because we are all unique.

Some people are natural evangelists. They find it easy to talk about Jesus, it's a gift! They start a conversation with someone and before you know it they are sharing their faith. Others find this way more difficult, but they may have other gifts, for example hospitality or mercy or generosity.

Missional living for someone with the gift of hospitality might look like intentionally look out for people to invite round to our homes for meals, not just those we know from church but neighbours, work colleagues etc. This creates opportunities to share faith in a more natural way. It isn't about getting people round and then doing a gospel presentation, it's about sharing life with people and then speaking up when the right time comes.

For someone with a gift of mercy missional living might come from volunteering for a Christian charity, or supporting something that reaches out to people who are struggling with the message of God's love.

For someone with a gift of generosity this might mean intentionally setting money aside to give to enable God's work to flourish.

Why Intentional?

The important part of missional living is being deliberate and intentional. This does not mean we build relationships with people just so that we can convert them, people will quickly see straight through this and loving our neighbour the way God does means that we continue to love them even if they reject our message.

Intentional missional living means that we constantly always keep this value high in our lives – and in the church – and deliberately look out for opportunities. For example, maybe at a particular time of year – eg Christmas – as well as thinking through all the preparations, the food the gifts etc. we add to the list 'how can I reach out to my neighbour during this season'.

It is important to keep this value high in our lives and in the life of the church because it is one of the easiest ones to lose.

It is also important that church leaders equip their people to be able to reach out and share their faith.

Churches begin by being missional, it is what brings them into existence. They are focussed on reaching lost people up to a point when they have a congregation. The focus then gently and slowly shifts to caring for the people in the congregation. There is nothing wrong with this and in fact it is necessary to care for one another BUT very



quickly the church finds itself spending all its energy on caring for itself. There are programs to run, Sunday school, youth, seniors work etc. There are people in the church who are a constant reminder that we need to care for youth and old people and single parents and families and single people.....however there are no 'non Christians' in the church and so their voice is never heard. Over time the church can forget and turn inwards, caring for their flock. As people move on, grow old and die etc so the church gradually declines.

Another issue is that church members, the longer they are Christians, tend to gradually lose their non-Christian connections and find most of their close friends are Christians.

This is a pattern that we see repeated across our nation. Churches in decline or already closed. Why? Because they became too inwardly focussed.

What we want to do is raise the value of missional living, not above the other values, but alongside them so that we can reach the town with the gospel.

If we hold this value high, it will create a culture where we are constantly asking

'how will doing xxxxx, help us to reach more people?'

'is doing this ministry or that ministry helping us to reach more people?'

'how do we equip our church family to reach their neighbours?'

'are we being effective with our mission?'

Summary

We hold the value of missional living – outwards to the world – high

This creates a culture where missional living is what we do.

We need to get the message out there. If we have a church with a culture that is only inwardly focussed most people's natural inclination will be to make sure they 'attend' church and connect with their church family. In this scenario the message won't spread because the culture is not outwardly focussed.

However, if we have a culture of missional living then people's natural inclination will be to make sure that not only do they attend church and connect with their church family but that they think about inviting others in.



Questions to discuss

- 1) Do you understand the new discipleship triangle, is there anything that is not clear?
- 2) Do you understand the vision, values, culture and strapline – again is there anything that is not clear?
- 3) Do you think you have a good balance in your life between the upwards, inwards and outwards?
- 4) If not which is stronger/weaker?
- 5) Do you think you have a good balance in our church between the upwards, inwards and outwards?
- 6) If not which is stronger/weaker?
- 7) Any other thoughts/comments